(b) The Gulf region is in India's neighbourhood. Its importance from the political, strategic and economic points of view cannot be over emphasised. India shares with the Gulf countries a common desire for peace, stability and security in the region. In persuance of this objective, India has continued the tradition of high-level visits to UAE and other Gulf countries for a regular review of regional and bilateral issues.

Death of an Indian Girl in Singapore

4163. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware that an eight years old Indian girl Saachi has been killed in a water park in Singapore ;

(b) if so, the details thereof ;

(c) whether Singapore High Commission has extended any help to the aggrieved family in the time of extreme grief ; and

(d) if no help has been extended, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTEROF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) On March 21, 2000, at about 2.15 PM Singapore time, two Indian girls Sukhna and Saachi were on a water ride called "Double Trouble" in the amusement park at Sentosa Island of Singapore. The two were riding on a rubber boat which overturned. Saachi got entangled inside the rubber matting and drowned. The exact cause leading to the drowning of Saachi is being investigated by the Singapore authorities.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. Indian High Commission in Singapore extended all necessary help to the relatives of Saachi including transportation of her body to India and follow up with the Singapore authorities with regard to investigation into the incident.

Understaffed Bangalore Passport Office

4164. SHRI K. C. KONDAIAH : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is fact that Bangalore Passport Office is understaffed ;

(b) if so, the steps taken to provide the required number of staff ;

(c) whether there is any proposal to open more customer counters at said Passport Office ; and

(d) if so, whether the Govt. has received any request for additional staff from the Bangalore Passport Office?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA) : (a) Yes, Sir. As of now, the Passport Office, Bangalore is short of one officer and 17 (seventeen) group 'C' staff.

(b) There is an overall shortage of staff and Officers in the Central Passport Organisation. However, action has been taken to transfer 9 (nine) group 'C' staff to the Bangalore office from other offices and the additional staff would be joining there shortly.

(c) With the additional staff, the Passport Officer would endeavour to open more customer counters.

(d) Yes, Sir. Based on the request received from PO Bangalore, some additional staff has been provided.

Efforts to keep Junta States out of NAM

4165. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL;

SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether India's proposal to keep Junta States out of NAM, placed before the 12th meeting of Foreign Ministers of the 115 nations, Non-Allgned Movement Conference on the 9th April, 2000 at Cartagena in Colombia, was unanimously accepted;

(b) whether the Common Wealth and Organisation of African Unity (OAU) had already decided that no ruler, who has usurped power will be allowed into its Summits; and

(c) if so, what are the other 231 point agenda/delcaration formalised by the above mentioned conference which would be further taken up at the next year's NAM Summit to be held in Dhaka?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTFRNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA) : (a) to (c) During the XIIth NAM Ministerial Conference in Cartagena on 8-9 April, 2000, India had strongly argued for removal from the membership of NAM those countries where rulers have usurped power and taken on the reigns of government through unconstitutional means. In his speech at the Conference, the External Affairs Minister had stated that the OAU and the Commonwealth had both "decided